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Dear Friends

Lent is the strongest season of the Church's year. Two sacraments dominate the entire period of five weeks - Baptism and Penance. Lent is therefore a time of re-birth and renewal for the whole Church.

At the very beginning, on Ash Wednesday, ashes are sprinkled on our heads to remind us of our sinfulness and the need for a true conversion of our hearts back to God. This action sets the tone for the remainder of Lent, and many of the prayers, the sombreness of the vestments and the altar decorations serve to remind us of how much we are in need of God's grace and equally how often we spurn it. But the future is not bleak. Many of the prayers of this season see Lenten penance as but the forerunner of Easter joy. Lent would not be lent without its climax in the victory of the Resurrection. We rid ourselves of the darkness of sin to make way for the light of the Risen Christ. Even for those of us who are already Christians Lent reminds us of those-life giving and cleansing waters by which we first met Christ face-to-face. We are therefore spurred on to renew the life of the risen Christ bestowed on us so richly.

We certainly experienced some extraordinary weather early in February. I travelled by train to Lourdes for the meeting and both England and France appeared to be waterlogged. On the return journey by coach a vicious storm made the channel interesting and so we bobbed about for close on four hours but eventually made landfall. People were very good and just dealt with the problems as they arose. The next day trains were delayed but I did get home in reasonable time. Remember all those people still suffering from the affects of this extraordinary weather. Let us hope that Easter will bring us some lovely spring weather. Alleluia.

YOUR CHARITABLE PRAYERS are requested for the repose of PETER MURRAY SM who died Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> and was buried on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> February in Hull. Peter had been parish priest in Sidcup for a number of years and had also served in Walsingham. It was good to see a contingent of people from both places showing their appreciation. May he rest in Peace. Amen.

MARIST PILGRIMAGES All the necessary arrangements have been implemented to comply with the recent regulations regarding pilgrimages. Our booking

now makes it absolutely clear that we are agents of Tangney Tours and bookings are now handled by them.

38<sup>th</sup> MARIST LOURDES PILGRIMAGE                      Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> / 31<sup>st</sup> May. Travel by coach and ferry. Includes 5 nights full board accommodation plus one extra meal; en-suite twin bedded rooms; travel insurance. Cost: Hotel Esplanade £410.00; Hotel Padoue £550.00. Booking forms available.

Monday 1<sup>st</sup> / Monday 8<sup>th</sup> September an interesting 'Holy Holiday' during which we will stop one night in Reims, four nights in Lyon, when we will be able to visit the city itself, some places of Marist interest and Ars and Chatillon-sur-Chalaronne, where St Vincent de Paul worked. On our journey north we would stay in Lisieux for two nights and follow in the footsteps of St Therese. Details have to be finalised but we will be using the P.O. Dover / Calais ferry. Booking forms now available. Cost £575.00.

*Marist Liturgical Calendar and Mass Intentions 2014*

Date	Feast or Celebration	Mass Intention
5 <sup>th</sup> Mar	Ash Wednesday. Beginning of Lent	
9 <sup>th</sup> Mar	Brief of Approbation of SM 1822	Deceased Marists
25 <sup>th</sup> Mar	Annuniation of Our Lord	

M. Coleman SM, Marist Way Regional Animator

